

## **I KNEW A LAD**

I knew a lad who went to sea  
And left the shore behind him.  
I knew him well: The lad was me,  
But now I cannot find him.

*Old sea chantey*

I came across the formal posed picture of my Navy recruit company, 140 or so teen-agers in new blue uniforms. Some of the faces are still familiar in memory, although I have seen none of them since the day we marched down to the train station at the end of our nine-week introduction to Navy life.

When we assembled at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in April of 1945, none of us had yet reached his eighteenth birthday. All of us were volunteers and most of us had been in high school a week before. All of us had been signed off by our parents as “minority enlistments” and I had wangled my way out of the last weeks of school with high school graduation assured. In due course, my mother attended the Galesburg High School commencement ceremonies and accepted my diploma with other mothers of young servicemen.

Our youth and enthusiasm for military service made for an ideal recruit company, surrounded by companies of older draftees and specialized companies of Radio/Electronics trainees. On the average, the “RT’s” were smarter than we, but a lot less adaptable to the military life. I don’t think the word “nerd” had yet been invented. The draftees were -- well -- draftees. As a result, our company, after the first week of adjustment, outperformed the others in every competitive category from military drill to barracks cleanliness. Top performance was recognized by pennants displayed in front of the company barracks. The pennants feature the silhouette of a crowing rooster and were called, simply, “Roosters.” We were a “Rooster” company. But I am ahead of the story.

### **Enlistment**

I enlisted in early March at the Navy recruiting office in Galesburg. Dad went with my and supplied the minority parent’s signature. As now the parent of sons, I can’t help but wonder what was going through his mind. My induction physical examination took place in Decatur, Illinois. I traveled there by bus from Galesburg with a half-dozen or so other boys from Knox County. All of us were anxious about the examination and I was immensely relieve when I passed it without comment, having been convinced through my boyhood that I was somehow unhealthy -- a consequence of my mother’s tuberculosis. The blood test was a new experience, the first of many. There was an older enlistee, a black man, who told me that if my blood foamed in the syringe it was “good blood!” Mine foamed. We were “sworn in” and issued orders for Temporary Duty Without Pay to wait for a call to active duty, and I went back to school.

## **My Last Day at Galesburg High School**

My last day in high school was memorable. After three or four weeks of waiting, early on a crisp, chilly morning in April, the farm telephone rang. It was Rose Devlin, the Rio postmistress, calling to say that a letter for me had come in from the Navy that she “thought I might want to see before I left for school.” I drove to Galesburg via Rio and picked up the letter and, sure enough, it was my order to active duty.

Arriving at Galesburg High School, I went to the Principal’s office and let the school administration know that I was on my way. Frank Snyder, Dean of Boys, saw me immediately in his office and gave me an angry scolding for what he regarded as a bad decision, excoriating me for “poor school citizenship” and declaring that I could come to no good! I resumed the class routine in a confused and pre-occupied state of mind.

I was in Miss Ryin’s English class, my favorite class and teacher, when a “call slip” was delivered asking me to leave class and go to the office of the Basketball coach. Arriving there, the coach gave me his good wishes and then said that “Someone wanted to see me back in the equipment room.” There among the odds and ends of athletic paraphernalia was waiting none other than Edgar Harden, the high school principal. He told me that he had overheard Dean Snyder’s angry tirade and assured me that it did not represent the school’s attitude, and he gave me the school’s best wishes. As we were talking, there were voices in the coaches office -- Dean Snyder! Mr. Harden shoved me into the coach’s lavatory, joined me there and closed the door until the Dean was gone! <sup>1</sup>

The politics of the whole affair were mysterious. Did Mr. Snyder smell a rat? What excuse did he have for visiting the Basketball coach? What did they say? In any event, it was Mr. Snyder’s last year at Galesburg High School. Eight or nine months later, after I had been assigned to the Officers’ Training Program, V-12, at the University of Nebraska, I happened to sit behind him at a Nebraska basketball game and learned that he was now a graduate student in the University! We said nothing about our last interview in Galesburg, but it lurked in the background of the conversation. Triumph!

## **Great Lakes**

The day after my tumultuous departure from high school, I took the bus again to Decatur. Dad drove me to the bus in Galesburg, but I remember nothing about the leave-taking from home. It seems insensitive and ungrateful of me, now, not to recall what must have been an emotional moment for my parents; but I suppose that my mind was on the future and I was absorbed in the adventure. That is the way of youth, and that is both the pain and reward of parenthood -- to see the young take wing and become themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Years later, Harden had become, at various times, president of Northern Michigan University, one of Michigan’s largest Oldsmobile dealers, and interim president of Michigan State. I was, at the time, Executive Assistant to the president of Central Michigan University. At some meeting I ran into Harden and reminded him of the incident. Like Queen Victoria, he “was not amused.”

After an overnight in a Decatur hotel, now with a crowd of boys, we were loaded onto a bus for Great Lakes Naval Training Center, north of Chicago. Again, I don't remember the bus ride. We must have traveled around Chicago, because I don't remember going through the city. It was late, and I was probably asleep.

We arrived at Great Lakes "Mainside" sometime after midnight. A chill misty rain was falling and our surroundings were hidden in the darkness. We were herded into a small entry room, issued a blanket and the number "624" was written on our right hands in indelible red ink. 624 was our company number and our identity for the next nine weeks. A petty officer identified as a "Master-at-Arms" ushered us through a double door and into what I could only sense as an immense dark space and by the light of his shielded flashlight led us past row after row of double bunks filled with sleeping recruits. We came to a section of empty bunks and were told to "turn in." There were only thin mattresses and no pillows. It was the first of several times in my life that I had to use my shoes as a pillow. The space was chilly and, wrapped in our blankets, we slept in our clothes. Excitement notwithstanding, I dropped off into deep sleep.

Entirely too soon, we were awakened by a bugle call played on a scratchy record. Over the next weeks I learned to wake up with the first hiss of the needle on the disk. With the lights on, I could get some idea of the size of building, at least that of a football field with a high arching ceiling. The room, if it could be called a room, was filled with bunks occupied by hundreds of men and boys, now milling about in the narrow aisles. I found my way to one of the several "heads" and lined up for my turn at the facilities. Finding my way back to our bunk area was more of a challenge.

The next experience was breakfast! Again, a Master-at-Arms showed us out of the drill-hall (as we learned to identify it) to another huge building which housed the mess hall. It was as large as the one in which we had slept with eight serving lines arranged on the four sides of the area. To call it a "room" would not do it justice. There were what seemed to be acres of mess-tables with benches attached. The space was bisected in four directions by a wide aisle. At the intersection, another Master-at-Arms literally directed traffic as we found our way from the mess lines to the tables. The sheer size and space of the areas, and the hundreds, probably thousands, of recruits was awesome to a farm boy.

For two days we waited -- and waited -- and waited, our days only punctuated by trips to the mess hall. We lay in our bunks or stood between them, being forbidden to leave our bunk area. Outside, the days remained chilly and overcast. We had no showers and still had to sleep on bare mattresses in our clothes, which by now we hadn't had off since we left our homes. A loudspeaker kept blaring out company numbers as groups were called out for processing. The scratchy bugle-record marked off the day with Reveille (Wake up!), Mess Call, and Taps (Lights out.)

## **The first “Big Day!”**

On the morning of the third day, the loudspeaker blared out our company number, “624.” the number which had been written in red ink on our right hands. Again, a Master-at-Arms, who by now we knew was simply called an “MAA,” led us off to still another large two-storey building. Inside, we were placed in a room with squares, about 4 feet by 4 feet, marked on the floor. We were told to stand in a square, one person to a square, and some sailors put a large cardboard box in front of each. They gave each of us a small canvas bag, which we subsequently learned to call a “ditty-bag.” Then, an MAA told us to take off all of our clothes, everything, and put them in our box. A marking-pen was passed down the line and each of us wrote his home address on the box. Our watches, wallets or rings were to be put in the ditty bag, which we would carry with us. We then walked past an immense storage-bin and tossed our clothes box into it -- irretrievable! (I have wondered with what feelings our parents received those boxes of clothes, lived in and slept in for nearly a week.) That was our first real break with civilian life.

There we were, stark naked, our clothing beyond recovery. We were herded into a large shower room where we had our first bath in a week. I suspect that with some of us it had been longer than that! After the shower, the day’s ordeal began. Someone gave us handful of forms and, single-file, we were launched on the labyrinth of physical examination. The model for the process was the industrial mass-production system. Navy doctors or petty-officer Hospital Corpsmen were stationed at intervals through a series of rooms, up and down stairs. At each station, some part of our anatomy was measured, probed or prodded. People made notes on our forms and mysterious numbers were written in different colors of ink on various parts of our bodies. More blood was drawn.

The proctological examination was memorable. A fat Navy doctor sat enthroned like Nero on a raised chair, holding a long stick and looking utterly bored, which probably he was. Two lamps arrayed on either side were focused at the average mid-point of the human body. An acolyte Hospital Corpsman told us to face away from the doctor and, “Bend over and spread your cheeks.” The doctor prodded here and there with his wand, saying not a word until we were waved on to the next station.

All of this went on until mid-afternoon without a break for food. The line finally trailed into another part of the building where each of us was given a large cloth bag. We later learned that it was a mattress cover for the thin pads that covered the bunks. We also learned to refer to it by the traditional Navy term, “fart sack!” Moving down a long counter backed by ranks of shelves, various items of clothing and equipment were tossed into the bag by more sailors manning the counter. It was at that point I learned that the colored numbers that decorated my naked body were clothing-sizes. My shoe size was 10 1/2 C. It was written in what I think was mercurochrome in large numbers on my stomach. As I came to the shoe station, the sailor at the counter called out, “10 1/2 Charlie!” I wondered how he knew my name, until I learned that “Charlie” was military-speak for the letter C.

Finally, FINALLY, we found ourselves in a long room with benches along either wall. The benches were divided into cubicles by partitions about a foot high with a bench at one end.

We emptied our bags into the space in front of us and, with direction by a petty-officer, we tried on each item of clothing: trousers with the traditional thirteen-button flap in front, jumpers-- the pullover tops with the square collar in back -- shoes and socks, Tee-shirts and boxer shorts as underwear, which we learned to call “skivvies,” and the yellow canvas laced leggings which gave the name to Boot Camp. But the ordeal was not yet over. Still entirely naked, we had to stencil our names or initials on each item of clothing with stencils that had been punched out and given us at some point along the line.

At long, long, last, we were told to dress in “Undress Blues,”-- blue trousers and the blue jumpers, the ones that did not have the three white stripes on the collar. (Those were our “Dress Jumpers.”) The trousers, in 1945, still had the traditional front flap fastened with thirteen buttons, rather than the modern fly front. They also had no pockets, requiring different stratagems for carrying wallets or handkerchiefs. Another challenge was the black neckerchief -- a large silk cloth which had to be rolled cornerwise into a tube about four feet long. This was passed under the broad jumper collar and fastened in front with a Square Knot. The white sailor hat, we learned, was to be worn “squared.” That is, straight on the head with the front edge one finger-width above the eyebrows and/or two finger-widths above the bridge of the nose. My picture taken on my first leave violates the rule! Lacing our leggings was a hurdle: “No, no. The laces go on the OUTSIDE of the leg!”

One further ordeal remained: the HAIRCUT! I remember that the barber-shop was on the mass-production model -- a long row of barber chairs. The barbers were, I believe, civilians, because we were charged two dollars for the haircut, the amount to be deducted from our first pay. No tipping required! The haircut took about 30 seconds and consisted in mowing the hair right down to the scalp!

A pause for reflection: Dressed in Navy uniform, I had the utterly euphoric feeling of being once again human. It was a baptism of sorts. Day-long nudity and a haircut had accomplished the real separation from civilian life and, perhaps, from boyhood. I was a sailor! Part of the “baptism” effect was a new identity in the form of a number stamped on the “dog-tags” we were also issued. I was # 753-89-17!

### **Chief Mullins**

Once dressed, Company 624 was introduced to our Boot Camp Chief Petty Officer. E.E. Mullins was rated Chief Specialist (Athletic). Rumor had it that in civilian life he had been an executive with the Boy Scouts of America, although his vocabulary, as we were to learn, was hardly one that Lord Baden-Powell would have approved. Chief Mullins was to become one of the important figures in my life, because he molded us into the excellent group that Company 624 eventually became, and accomplished much by his own example. He was a small, wiry man with a high shrill voice, and his whole body seemed bursting with energy.

The day was not yet over. Chief Mullins ordered us to “fall out” to the area outside the building -- our first breath of fresh air for almost eight hours. The rain had stopped and the sun was moving down the western sky. We were told to throw our loaded “fart sacks” into a waiting truck for delivery to our barracks. Chief Mullins lined us up in four ranks and

divided the 140 of us into two platoons, the tallest in the lead. That, as it happened, was me. Then it was, "Right FACE, forward MARCH!" Off we set for what was to be our company home for the next nine weeks. It was a comic sight. I know, because later we would see new companies march past, skipping and stumbling trying to arrive at some sort of marching step.

The initial late-afternoon march turned out to be something like four miles from the Great Lakes "Mainside" to the 25th Regiment barracks area, called for some reason, "Green Bay." As we marched past the barracks of other companies who had been there for at least two weeks we were hailed with the call, "You'll be SOOOR-RY!" Thankfully, the first stop was the battalion Mess Hall -- a smaller equivalent of the Mainside one. We were ravenous. Then it was off to our barracks for assignment to bunks and pack our new clothes into our stiff new canvas Sea Bags. And so to bed -- exhausted.

### **The Barracks**

Each barracks building had two floors -- or decks, as we learned to call them. Each deck housed a separate company. Company 624 occupied the lower, ground-level, deck. Double bunks were ranged in two rows one on each side of the long room. Down the center of the room was a row of wooden pillars on each side of which was mounted a shelf and below it a 4"x4" wooden bar called a "jack-stay." On the jack-stay hung our sea-bags. The sea-bags contained all of our clothing. They had to be hung so that the lip of the sea-bag was precisely at the edge of the bar, tied with a square-knot and the ends of the line tucked into the top of the bag. On the shelf, were our dress shoes, "flat hats" -- those blue "Donald Duck" hats with satin ribbons, no longer a part of U.S. Navy uniform, more's the pity -- and our whisk-brooms. Personal items were in our ditty-bags, tied to the head of each bunk, likewise with a square-knot, the "bitter ends" tucked in. The ditty-bag could be no fuller than would allow an inspecting officer to pass his hands, pressed finger-tip to fingertip and thumb to thumb, down the bag top to bottom.

At the front of the barrack-room were four tables for writing, and a large galvanized "G.I. can," for refuse. The G.I. can had to be polished until it shone as though it were chrome-plated.

### **Boot Camp Routine**

Much of the boot camp routine was devoted to military drill. We marched up and down for hours. The area between company barracks was paved with asphalt and called the "grinder." In a week most of us had blisters on our heels which we blamed on the Navy-issue shoes. Actually, the blame was not for the shoes but for our feet. Eventually I came to regard the shoes as the most comfortable I had ever owned or ever will own. Our feet were being straightened and molded to the shoes!

One of the great break-through moments came at the point in our marching when in some mysterious way we began to hear our feet hit the ground together in rhythm and we were truly marching! Chief Mullins called the cadence in his penetrating voice: "Ha-wat, toop, ah-reep, hop, a-reep!" Along the way we were introduced to all of the various marching

maneuvers: Left flank, right flank, to the rear, and so forth. We were very good! With the mastery of marching came the addition of rifle drill. Rifles were a wooden mock-up that looked very much like the 1903 bolt-action Springfield. With these toy rifles we learned all of the basic movements of the Manual of Arms, although the rifles weighed considerably less than the real ones. We discovered that when we were introduced to the “real thing” on the rifle range.

It helps to recall that none of the 140 boys had yet reached his 18th birthday and all were volunteers. Since it was late in the war, we were surrounded, as I wrote earlier, by companies of draftees, some in their thirties or forties and anything but enthusiastic. There were “radar companies” -- tech-nerds who were notoriously sloppy. As a result, we became the regiment’s star outfit. There were inter-company competitions in military drill, barracks cleanliness, and personal inspection. For each competition there was a weekly award. The winning company had a flag posted in front of the barracks. Flags were of different colors and each had on it the outline of a rooster. From about our third week, all of the “roosters” flew in front of the 624 barracks. Credit also Chief Mullins, who had to take a draft of sailors to the West Coast and was gone for a week and so does not appear in the company photograph.

### **Guard Duty**

Each barracks had guards posted at the entrance and the rear door. We each took our turn standing the four-hour “watches.” This introduced us to the Navy watch routine: Forenoon watch 0800-1200; Afternoon watch 1200-1600; Dog-watch, 1600-2000; Evening watch, 2000-2400; and Mid-watch, 2400-0400. There! I have introduced the Navy way of telling time. “Dog watch” was generally split into two 2-hour watches. Dog watch because it was “cur-tailed.” Get it?

After the third week, 624 was designated as the battalion Guard Company. That meant that we adopted another set of watches from 2000 to 0800. These watches we stood in the battalion office and our job was to carry messages and to patrol the six battalion barracks to keep the company guards alert. I vividly recall walking through barracks of sleeping recruits and sometimes finding guards literally asleep on their feet!

### **Coping with Boot Camp**

I think that there was a hidden agenda in the Boot Camp routine. On one level, we were expected to do everything perfectly by the Navy book. On another level, we learned all sorts of practical and non-regulation short-cuts. We took pride in our appearance; but those yellow-canvas leggings were a stigma of our inexperience. The first thing we did was to wash them again and again with the rough Bon-Ami soap bars until they were almost pure white. Stowed in our sea-bags, our trousers and jumpers were wrinkled and baggy. We learned to fold them carefully at night and put them between our mattresses and the heavy canvas hammock which covered the bunk-bottom. It was strictly forbidden, falling under the disciplinary category of “Gear Adrift.” Still, it provided the semblance of a press. *(Yes, in 1945 the Navy was still issuing hammocks. They served as luggage with our blankets rolled*

*inside them for travel -- when we would eventually be called upon to travel.)*

Chief Mullins had seen it all before, and one night about three weeks into the process, he turned the lights on after we had turned in, turned us out and began flipping mattresses over, making us roll our clothes up and stuff them into the sea-bags! But that didn't stop us. It was just another rite of passage.

At first, we were so tired after our days of marching that we would all be asleep by "Lights Out." Lights Out was signaled by a recorded bugle-call of the familiar Taps on the scratchy loudspeakers, and an announcement, "Now, Taps. Taps. Lights out. All hands turn into your bunks. Keep silence about the decks throughout the night!" It was one of those announcements that became familiar, word for word, on all the ships I later sailed in.<sup>2</sup>

Just before Taps, there was a final roll-call; and early on most of us had to be waked up to answer the roll. As we got used to the routine, we didn't go to sleep quite as early and there was a certain amount of horseplay after Lights Out. Again, one night as this was going on, Chief Mullins -- who had private quarters next to the big barrack-room -- turned on the lights and yelled, "If you sailors don't want to sleep, dress and turn out for muster on the grinder! We rolled out, dressed, and lined up on the battalion drill-field for roll-call. After roll-call, we were dismissed. We undressed and went to bed -- for about ten minutes, just long enough to be well and truly asleep! Then, the lights went on AGAIN and we were turned out for another roll-call muster -- this time in a different uniform! He did this three times and we began to expect another turn-out. The last ten-minute interval passed and we waited, and waited, until we finally decided that we had had the lesson!

The morning routine was interesting. At Reveille -- the morning wake-up bugle call -- and after we had crowded into the "Head" for our morning necessities, we had to make up our bunks. The first few days were a riot. Blankets had to be folded in a precise square. Can you imagine 140 boys who had never folded a blanket in their lives and working in a crowded space besides? After folding, and after the mattress-covers had been stretched taught enough, literally, to bounce a quarter, blanket-squares had to be lined on the bunks in a precise row from one end of the barracks to the other, using a long chalk-line. Pillows likewise. The wooden bunks were separated by a space measured precisely by the length of an arm from the closed fist to the back of the elbow -- a surprisingly standard measurement.

## **Laundry**

### **Hostess House, "Geedunk" and a visit from home.**

After the first four weeks of training, we were allowed to go to the regimental Hostess House during our few off-duty hours. The Hostess House was a soda fountain and sundries shop

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<sup>2</sup> The preface, "Now," served as a call for attention to an announcement on the ship's loudspeaker system. The more standard shipboard style would be, "Now, hear this!" Or some old sailors would say, "D'ye hear there."



operated by the United Services Organization (U.S.O.) and staffed by volunteers, mainly young women. In the Navy, candy and ice cream were -- and maybe still are -- called “gee dunk.” Aboard ships, the sundries shop that sells small items is called the Geedunk.

The Hostess House also served as a visitors’ center, with lounges and tables for conversation. Sometime during the fifth or sixth week of training, my mother and father drove up from Rio for a Sunday afternoon visit. I don’t remember much about it, except that it was a welcome break from the routine. We ate ice cream and I had a chance to tell about my adventure. My mother thought that the “sailor suit” was undignified!

This may be a good point at which to mention that we were being paid at two-week intervals at the rate of \$25 per month. We learned the process of lining up in front of the Paymaster’s table, filling out a pay receipt, presenting it properly and receiving the money in cash.

### **Church and the Great Lakes Choir**

### **Rifle range, Anti-aircraft, Poison gas, Fire-fighting, and Boat-basin.**

There were many exercises and activities other than drill, especially later in the program. Everything seemed to happen over at the Mainside, four and five miles away, which entailed eight or ten miles of marching. One thing that made us proud of Chief Mullins was that he marched every step of the way with us. Other company CPO’s grabbed the first passing Jeep and left the company to make its own way.

We had only one day of shooting on the rifle range. It was a 200 yard range and we were introduced to the Springfield 30-03 A3 rifle. It had a powerful “kick” and after the forenoon session our right shoulders were already painful. By mid-afternoon, every shot was agony. One poor fellow flinched as he pulled the trigger and took the “kick” in his face, requiring hospitalization! The next day in the showers we compared our black-and-blue chests and shoulders.

For three weeks or so, we had been able to hear the “thu-bump,thu-bump” of 40 mm. anti-aircraft guns; and we could see the black pock-marks of exploding shells in the eastern sky. It sounded exciting. Finally it was our turn and we marched over to the range on the shores of Lake Michigan. A Navy plane towed a silk target sleeve up and down over the lake and we operated the “40’s” and the 20 mm. anti-aircraft machine guns. I have since wondered about those pilots, knowing that they were being shot at by “Boots,” even though the tow-lines of the target sleeves were a half-mile long. I will spare all of the technology of loading the four-shell clips and the business of pointing, training and firing, although I remember it well. The war in the Pacific was still on, and there was a lively chance that we would have to fire those weapons in real action. Things began to look less and less like Boy Scout camp.

### **Medical and Dental**

No military career is complete without a complete series of inoculations for every disease known to humankind. These ordeals came at regular intervals. Crews of Hospital Corpsmen set up shop in the battalion drill-hall. The companies lined up and, jumpers off, moved past the inoculation stations. One Corpsman slapped a patch of antiseptic on the upper arm with a paintbrush and the next threw a needle into it like a dart into a target. Sometimes it was both shoulders at the same time, crews working both sides, port and starboard as it were. Any laggard who didn't move on promptly was likely to get a second shot! At one point, the whole company was so painfully stiff in the shoulders that we didn't take off our black navy sweaters for two or three days.

Dentistry was another story. One day we were told to brush our teeth and off we marched to the "Mainside" dental clinic. My teeth were bad and the dentist assigned to me performed 15 preparations for filling. Then he told me to go and eat, it having reached the noon hour! Having eaten, I was back in the chair. The dentist blasted out the cavities with cold air and then injected an anesthetic for the extraction of one tooth. While the anesthetic was working, he packed the 15 cavities -- at most five minutes! No wonder that in two years' time, it all had to be done again, this time in the University of Nebraska Dental School. The totally bad tooth shattered in the forceps and bits of tooth were working to the surface for years. The dentist was in a hurry: he was anxious to get to a ball game!

### **Fire-fighting and Chemical Warfare**

We had to learn how to fight fires on a ship. A special area of the camp was equipped with a steel building designed like the engine room of a ship. Oil was flooded into the bilges under steel gratings and set afire. We wrestled fire-hoses into the inferno, thick smoke billowing around and reducing visibility to absolute zero. I suppose that the idea was to let us know that it actually is possible to function in that kind of situation. We managed to put the fires out and emerged smoke-blackened, whereby hangs another story.

Chemical warfare was a little different. We learned to identify different poison gasses by smell, Phosgene (rotten silage), Chlorpicrin (musty hay) -- both scents familiar to farm boys. We learned to put on gas masks quickly when someone yelled, "GAS!" Then there was a neat game: we had to run through clouds of smoke produced by smoke bombs. We ran back and forth, having a great time until the smoke bomb was, unexpectedly,-- Tear Gas! Someone yelled "GAS!" and we had to struggle to get our masks in place with only marginal success!

### **Punishment**

Yes, there was occasional misbehavior, and misbehavior in the Navy carries its consequences. I did not escape. After the Fire Fighting exercise the shower didn't get all of the smoke out of my hair and the next morning my pillow was smudged with oily soot. I turned the pillow upside down when I made my bunk, but it didn't work. When I came back after the daily barracks inspection, the pillow was tossed into the center of the bunk and I was "on report." It cost me two hours of rifle calisthenics in the drill hall!

## **The General Classification Test**

This was, perhaps, the most important test in my entire educational career, although I didn't know it at the time. We were herded into another huge room, this one fitted with standard school desks. We spent half a day there taking a long multiple-choice, machine-scored test. We only knew that it had something to do with the kind of jobs and duty assignments the Navy would give us, once we had finished recruit training. I later learned that my score was one of the highest to be made at Great Lakes, probably because the really smart people had found a way of avoiding the boot camp! The test result had a lot to do, not only with my Navy career, but also the entire rest of my life. I also learned later, from educational literature, that the Navy GCT was the forerunner of the Educational Testing Service's Scholastic Aptitude Test.

A week or so after the test, when the scores had been entered in our service jackets (the personnel file that would follow us forever after) we were interviewed individually by a petty officer Classification Specialist. It was in this interview that I asked about the Navy V-12 program -- or maybe the Specialist mentioned it first. Anyway, I was given the forms and I filled them out. They were to resurface months later but at the time I had no idea what was done with them.

The V-12 program was a program for the training of Navy officers in civilian colleges and universities. I had heard of it in high school and knew that it was one way to pay for a college education -- which my family could no way afford. I used the opportunity as an argument for getting my dad to sign for my enlistment. Later, when I had indeed made into the V-12 at the University of Nebraska, I was home on Thanksgiving leave. At the dinner-table one day, I said to Dad that when I had persuaded him to sign for my enlistment I didn't really think I had much of a chance of getting into the program. He replied, "You know, Charles, I didn't either!" So much for trying to con your parents!

**"Six more days and a breakfast!"**